

# CD Report!

Spring 2008



## Tompkins County Health Department

### *Test, Treat, Report, Prevent*

The Tompkins County Health Department's communicable disease team is pleased to introduce our CD Report! The world of infectious diseases changes daily both locally and globally. This newsletter is to keep you aware of disease trends. Working together we can prevent increased disease incidence in our county.

# SYPHILIS IS ON THE RISE!

## RECENT SYPHILIS HISTORY

Providers may have seen the news coverage about the recent increase in syphilis cases in Tompkins County and received updates and information from the Tompkins County Health Department (TCHD). In 2007, Tompkins County had 3 primary cases of syphilis, 1 secondary case of syphilis, 1 early latent case of syphilis, and 1 late latent case of syphilis.

Between December 2007 and March 2008, there was one case each in January (late latent), February (early latent), and March (early latent) confirmed. The February and March cases are part of an ongoing and expanding investigation by NYSDOH Regional office of the Tompkins County primary syphilis index case diagnosed in December. The March case was co-infected with HIV and, like the February case, involved MSM (men having sex with men), the use of Internet sites and multiple anonymous sex partners. TCHD organized a special workgroup to strategize interventions

to address the local syphilis morbidity. Workgroup members includes Gannett Health Services, Hammond Health Center, TC3 Health, Planned Parenthood, TCHD and regional NYSDOH.

As a result of increased outreach education urging syphilis testing, particularly at Gannett Health Services and Planned Parenthood of the Southern Finger Lakes, two cases were identified in April 2008 (1 primary case and 1 late latent case). In May three more were discovered (1 early latent and 2 late latent). To date, 6 of 8 cases were associated with MSM activity.



## HOW DID THE INCREASE IN CASES OCCUR?

There is a national trend for anonymous internet sex “hook-ups” to occur on multiple internet sites, such as “Craigslist”, and this is propelling a spike in all STDs including syphilis. In the past 10 years, there have been few cases of syphilis in our county, therefore providers have not considered syphilis when interviewing patients and evaluating clinical symptoms. Patients also overlook a symptom such as a chancre or a rash that typically goes away on its own. Testing for syphilis has been neglected during the routine STD screening for chlamydia, gonorrhea and HIV. Sporadic testing and not treating partners to syphilis cases are “missed opportunities” in which the partners have left a provider office without testing or treatment services.

## WHAT CAN BE DONE TO CONTROL SYPHILIS?

The Tompkins County Health Department with the help of the State and Federal governments is placing educational information on targeted internet sites. Locally, the workgroup is encouraging testing and treatment with outreach activities, posters, ads and a dedicated website.



**TEST:** Providers are encouraged to test appropriately for syphilis, including a careful sexual history of both men and women to determine risk. If your patient is MSM, screen him at least every 6 months. Conduct a careful symptom check at time of visit and elicit information about symptoms since last visit. If a patient has symptoms or has had them during the time between visits, test for syphilis with the RPR *and* a confirmatory test concurrently. Also test for chlamydia, gonorrhea and HIV. For a refresher on syphilis

symptoms, testing, and treatment, refer to the module, *An Update and Review of the Diagnosis and Management of Syphilis*. Prioritize partners to a confirmed case of syphilis for testing and treatment to slow the spread in our community.

**TREAT:** Treatment depends on the staging of the disease so please refer to the *Summary of 2006 CDC Treatment Guidelines* for sexually transmitted diseases. Go to: [www.cdc.gov/std/treatment](http://www.cdc.gov/std/treatment) for information.

**REPORT:** Call the Tompkins County Health Department if any patient presents with syphilis symptoms or has an RPR of 1:16 or greater.



**PREVENT:** Educate on the prevention of syphilis.  
Display relevant posters and pamphlets.

Gonorrhea Rx Update: **Cefixime** (Suprax®) 400mg tablets are again available from Lupin Pharmaceuticals (866-587-4617) for treatment of gonorrhea.

Refer to CDC treatment guidelines for appropriate use.



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